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Because of the incredible bungling of the CIA, Vitaly Yurchenko, the No. 5 man in the KGB, is back in Soviet hands.

At an unprecedented televised press conference at the Soviet Embassy, Mr. Yurchenko claimed that he had been "forcibly abducted" in Rome by the CIA, drugged, and flown to the United States. Being in KGB custody, Mr. Yurchenko must say what he is told to say.

The CIA could explode this cloak-and-dagger tale by disclosing what has been known to me and to certain newspapermen in Rome and Paris for some time. Before turning himself over to the CIA, Mr. Yurchenko had a long meeting with Italian Foreign Minister Giulio Andreotti at which he not only provided information on the identity of key KGB agents but also outlined several of the KGB's current major operations.

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The defective defector

For reasons best known to CIA Director William Casey, this conclusive evidence that Mr. Yurchenko defected voluntarily, and of his determination to do so, has not been made public by the Central Intelligence Agency. Instead, the CIA has been telling friendly reporters that Mr.

Yurchenko was of little value and had been giving them nothing of real importance. This is belied by the fact that Mr. Casey has had three long and secret meetings with Mr. Yur-

chenko to obtain information useful to the president at the summit, and that this material is so significant that it has been incorporated into one of the briefing papers prepared for Mr. Reagan.

At the present time, the CIA's major interest is to cover up blundering and incompetence. The chain of events leading to Mr. Yurchenko's so-called "re-defection" are such as to warrant a full investigation by the Senate Intelligence Committee. The security in the case was so lax as to make one wonder.

When Vitaly Yurchenko was brought to the United States, he was placed in a CIA "safe house" some 20 miles out of Fredericksburg in Northern Virginia — but there was no safety at the safe house. Mr. Yurchenko was allowed to come and go as he pleased. This, though the CIA is aware that the KGB knows the location of every safe house in the Washington area.

And it took no James Bond acumen to gather this information. So casual is the CIA that in the case of one such safe house, people in the neighborhood referred to it as the "CIA hotel."

The moment Mr. Yurchenko was known to be in the United States, the KGB set up a surveillance at every CIA safe house in the area. In short order, it discovered where its former No. 5 man was being lodged. On the Sunday night at which Mr. Yurchenko slipped away, he had gone out to dinner at a Washington restaurant accompanied, it is said, by a CIA agent — with the KGB following.

At the first opportunity — when Mr. Yurchenko was alone — the KGB approached him. It is obvious from Mr. Yurchenko's televised press conference that they threatened the life of his 16-year-old son unless he returned with them to the Soviet Embassy.

To argue that Mr. Yurchenko returned voluntarily is ridiculous. He knows with absolute certainty that once back in the hands of the KGB his days are numbered — his fate a rubber ball stuffed in the mouth and a bullet through the back of the head in a Lubyanka cellar. (The rubber ball absorbs the bullet and avoids mess.) This is the KGB's standard operating procedure in punishing "traitors."

Was the CIA, in its offhand security, naive enough not to realize that the KGB would move heaven and earth to get Vitaly Yurchenko and exhibit him to the world as a "victim" of American "terrorism"?

For the KGB, moreover, it was essential to bring Mr. Yurchenko to "justice" — no matter how much he had already talked — as an example to its other agents.

An investigation of the CIA's handling of the Yurchenko case will determine who was responsible for allowing Mr. Yurchenko to move about freely in a city like Washington.

Why was he not under 24-hour guard in a safe house to protect him from what anyone could have predicted would happen? Why are other high-ranking Soviet defectors, as any investigation will show, given the same latitude?

Why does CIA have the deserved reputation of being the most loose-lipped intelligence service in the world?

These are questions the Senate Intelligence Committee should be asking. Questions should also be asked about why and how a CIA operation to contain Col. Muammar Qaddafi, Libyan dictator and financier of worldwide terrorism, was leaked to *The Washington Post*.

The answers will tell us why the national security is being jeopardized systematically by what should be its major guardian.

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